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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Status of Women in Asia and the Pacific Region

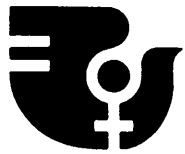
Series 5

ROLE OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN ENHANCING THE STATUS OF WOMEN

1986



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PREFACE

Five papers on issues concerning women's status in Asia and the Pacific were commissioned for the Regional Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting for the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace which was held on 26-30 March 1984 in Tokyo. The meeting was organized by ESCAP in co-operation with the United Nations Center for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs and hosted by the Government of Japan. These papers, which documented regional issues emerging from accumulated evidence during the United Nations Decade for Women, were subsequently expanded into more detailed studies which could be of value for governments and concerned agencies as a basis for planning and implementing programmes to advance the status of women and their full integration in the Asian and Pacific region.

The five studies on specific issues concerning women in development are now being published by ESCAP as the Status of Women in Asia and the Pacific Region *series which include the following publications:*

1. *"Women in the economy: employment", by Linda Y.C. Lim*
2. *"Socio-cultural and attitudinal factors affecting the status of women in South Asia", by T. Scarlett Epstein*
3. *"Impact of science and technology on women", by Malee Suwana-adth and the ESCAP secretariat*
4. *"Participation of women in politics", by Rounaq Jahan*
5. *"Role of the women's movement and non-governmental organizations in enhancing the status of women", by the ESCAP secretariat*

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A. ORIGINS – SPONTANEOUS OR DELIBERATE?

The origins of women's movements and organizations in the Asia-Pacific region can be traced to periods of social, political, economic and even religious and ideological upheaval and change. Some came about because of colonialism, some emerged from the struggles for liberation, others from drastic changes and overthrows of one system and replacement with another in the countries of the region. Iranian women for example, experienced unprecedented changes in their status after the Constitutional Revolution of 1905 and the country's plunge into westernization-modernization; India's women's movements and early organizations grew with struggles for national liberation; China's organizing of women was a strategic part of its change of system, and in almost all of the Pacific, the coming of Europeans, especially the coming of missionaries and traders, led to changes in the status of women and organizations for promotion of new, European-style behaviour.

It is not clear why periods of societal change have been accompanied by awareness of differences between the roles and status of men and women and attempts to change the order of things. One theory, born of the experiences of wars and struggles is that at such times all factions need their maximum human resources and therefore mobilize women to assume many more roles than expected of them in normal times. Their assumption of these new roles proves their capability to themselves and to men and opens their eyes to possibilities and alternatives. Similarly, ideological revolutions are built on different images of society than the prevailing ones and inevitably require altered relationships, status and roles for both men and women. Their success depends on the extent to which they are able to alter the old and make people into the new image with appropriate attitudes and behaviour.

Whether women's organizations and movements originated in awareness of injustices against women, or were prompted by almost enforced ideas of outsiders (e.g., missionaries and their wives), they were undoubtedly influenced by contact with the west and western ideas and cultures, either through direct intervention or by subtle absorbtion of information and increased contact. Among the influences were also the activities of the League of Nations and the suffragette movement.

This is not to say that there were no women's groups or organized women in the countries and cultures of the region. Women's circles for different purposes have existed through human history, particularly because of the historical segregation of sexes and division of roles. Women's weaving and craft groups are indigenous to many Pacific countries and women's religious and ritual circles are common in Asian countries. But women's organizations for the purpose of changing or improving some aspect of women's lives and not for preservation of status quo and long-standing practices have definitely been

influenced by cross-fertilization with European cultures and can be traced to as early as sixteenth century but becoming more obvious in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The changes in women's lives that have arisen from these disparate influences, whatever their origin, have not all necessarily resulted in the betterment of women's status and lives since they spring from comparison with a different point of view and image of women. In the Polynesian cultures of the Pacific for instance, women traditionally occupied high status which began to deteriorate with the coming of the missionaries and their view of women's position, and was completed with the advent of western style governments and administrations which excluded them from decision-making and leadership roles they had enjoyed in their own ancient cultures.

On the positive side, in many of the Asian regions, gross injustices against females (children and adult) such as female infanticide and child marriage were brought to awareness and publicized by reformers and educated women precisely because of comparison with treatment of females in other cultures and countries.

To say then that any of these organizations and movements were spontaneous is misleading. Their origins can be traced to an urge or need created by awareness of different images of women and promoted by individuals who found likeminded people. The desired changes were voluntarily accepted by the women; and sometimes sought by them.

The degree and duration of such changes have depended on many factors, but reversion to old and abandoned roles and status of women is quite common. Generally, the changes that have been sought or accepted by women and men voluntarily seem to be of a more fundamental and lasting nature, than those imposed from above or by groups in power. Changes requiring alteration of entrenched cultural and religious beliefs and values are most difficult to achieve, and more likely to meet resistance at all levels of society and among women themselves. These observations have a bearing on obstacles which will be discussed fully later in this paper.

B. FUNCTIONS

In the second half of the twentieth century women's movements in the region picked up momentum and women's organizations flourished to a point that the number and diversity of their objectives and activities overwhelm any attempt to categorize or make sense of their reason for being. The number of non-governmental organizations in some countries of the region can range from 25 to 200 and in smaller countries of the region like some Pacific Islands the majority of women may belong to two or three organizations.

Generally though if these are religious and parochial groups, the purpose is instruction, education, indoctrination and monitoring of women's behaviour.

Such groups also instruct women in better methods of family care and performance of domestic duties in line with the image of women in their religion.

Those movements and organizations of women developing concurrently with revolutions and national independence movements bring women into the struggle as organizers, workers and promoters. Women in these movements have contributed to social transformation of the society as well as to outward changes in political-governmental systems. They have also continued their efforts in the reconstruction of liberated countries and changed societies.

The work of the women's wing of Vanuaku Pati, the ruling party of Vanuatu, the Vietnam Women's Union, All-China Women's Federation, the Women's Islamic Revolutionary Association of Iran and the Bangladesh women's organizations are a few examples. There are numerous others still engaged in such movements as the region undergoes political and social changes.

Another category of women's organizations has grown from a desire for mutual assistance or from humanitarian and welfare perspectives. These have generally directed their work toward alleviating poverty, disease, hunger, physical labour and harsh environments. Many of today's service organizations for example had their roots in charity, welfare and other groups formed to help people during and after natural and man-made disasters such as wars and earthquakes.

Some traditional women's groups and circles which existed mainly for social interaction and entertainment have gradually changed into associations working for the economic improvement of women, like the weaving groups in Tonga and Niue which have formed co-operatives and centres for retailing of their handicrafts.

Women's movements and non-governmental organizations at this time were engaged in two quite different areas of activity: those who were organizing and campaigning for alleviation and elimination of socio-cultural injustices against women, and which strove to change women's status through legislation or by fiat; and those who aimed at the welfare of deprived women among the masses of disadvantaged, powerless and rural populations.

The leaders and organizers of these two types of movements however generally came from socially conscious, educated and privileged classes of society, but diverged in their perception of their aims and roles. Whereas the first group recognized the relationship between class and status, and tried to attack the root causes of women's inferior status; the second group strove to heal the symptoms.

Since discriminatory, oppressive practices are usually directed by the powerful against the powerless, it was obvious that the two movements' constituencies were composed of practically the same women; it would have been more beneficial for women if these movements had worked co-operatively

instead of separately. To this day, fusion of these movements and organizations has happened only in a few cases and they remain stubbornly separate, but with a subtle role reversal: the very groups who were working at grassroots level for welfare purposes are increasingly expected to champion the cause of equality and justice for women while some working at the top have become the preservers of tradition and status quo.

C. THE REGIONAL PICTURE SINCE MID-SEVENTIES

It was in this context that the preparations for the International Women's Year, the event itself and the subsequent flow of declarations, plans of action and programmes for their implementation which were supported mostly by aid from outside the region and international agencies.

Since the main thrust of the declarations and programmes were governmental policies and programmes, those women's organizations which were closely linked to government or were seen by government as representing women's interests became recipients and implementors of programmes more or less passively. This was passive in that the organizations and their beneficiaries had nothing or very little to say about the kind, quality, quantity, suitability or the need for the activities. Since governments had either established the organization, or generally chosen the one most supportive of the prevailing views, whatever came into the country and was handed out, was meekly accepted and done.

Since aid for women's programmes (administered through intergovernmental and international agencies) had to be disbursed through government machinery, many smaller non-governmental organizations were left out, especially those at the grassroots level which had access to the majority of rural, disadvantaged women, for whose benefit these programmes were designed, but which had no access to government. Government red tape and bureaucratic hurdles and some newly established government machinery kept non-governmental organizations at arms length, particularly in the first half of the Decade.

Although some international non-governmental organizations such as the Associated Country Women of the World, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), international church organizations, and so on, came to the aid to non-governmental organizations, their resources and power in the country could not possibly match that of United Nations and regional and bilateral agencies.

This state of events was fortunate in one sense since non-governmental organizations, deprived of the resources and programmes, began the hue and cry for more access to resources and they spear-headed criticisms of these programmes and operations.

By 1980, not only women's development programmes, but the very development strategies they were linked with had come under fire for failure to

have a profound impact on the situation of women and the countries of the region.

In these circumstances of disenchantment, non-governmental organizations did much to direct attention and development aid to the non-governmental sector and the rural areas.

By 1984, the picture was of increasing participation of non-governmental organizations at grassroots level in development programmes directed at enhancing the lives of women. But most of these programmes are designed on the general assumption that development as perceived by national governments and aid agencies would necessarily enhance the status of women. Yet very few questions are asked by women about the type of development projects they are carrying out, and whether their status (specifically in terms of prestige, power and recognition) is being enhanced or whether their role remains one simply of being workers.

Fortunately, there is growing awareness among knowledgeable women that to change the situation they must have influence on decisions that determine the type, quality and quantity of aid to women. They are demanding to be part of the decision-making. The loudest voices come from women outside the government bureaucracies, but where they find understanding sympathizers in government, they are listened to.

Related concerns of women at this point are the pressures and impositions of international agencies and women's movement. Women at national level are demanding a respite to determine their own goals, decide on strategies suitable to their countries, and to do what they can within their own capabilities.

D. CHANGES AND DEVELOPMENTS

1. Negative trends

It is ironical that the Decade that began with the goal of equality as its priority, has fragmented into so many directions and false starts that equality issues have been submerged in a flurry of activities directed towards economic development. And while non-governmental organizations from grassroots organizations to the middle class enclaves and revolutionary movements are getting rural women to cultivate home gardens, breast-feed their babies and dig ditches and build roads, the issue of equality is often forgotten.

One question raised by a women's organization in the Pacific during a recent election campaign raised such a furore among interested parties in the media that its leadership lay low and did not pursue the question. The women of another political party in the region, after three years of experiencing discrimination in their own party are just beginning to organize fund-raising activities and to fund the election campaigns of women in some districts.

It has been easier for non-governmental organizations and women's movements in the region to identify with global issues like peace, denuclearization, decolonization and struggles against apartheid than to face the women's situation closer to home. This is very much due to the backlash and/or indifference toward women's development programmes they are experiencing in their countries.

The Decade's main strategies which chose the governmental structures as both targets and instruments of change are mainly responsible for the backlash and apathy. The international, regional and national plans of action mostly demanding action from governments read like the ten commandments; full of "should" and "must". The years of the Decade prove that these plans had very little real impact, because they were built on the assumption that government can do everything. Even where governments accepted the declarations, set up the machineries and decreed the desired changes, the task of changing entrenched attitudes, values, and practices proved very difficult.

The governments and non-governmental organizations have slackened their efforts when faced with difficulties, and political/cultural backlash has paralysed some of the programmes that were initiated in the first half of the Decade. In other situations, the backlash has led to the discontinuation and even reversal of policies and programmes. In the first three years after 1975, there were more women appointed to decision-making positions or elected to office in the region than there are now, and many organizations once active in enhancing the status of women through political and public channels and mechanisms have lost momentum in the face of opposition, lack of funds and defection of members.

Such retreats by women from active participation in politics and public affairs occur largely because to face and change the order of things as they have been for centuries at the national level is simply an overwhelming task. When non-governmental organizations set their sights on more feasible goals, such as putting women into the local councils and village development committees, they have been more successful. At the local level, the barriers have been easier to overcome and sometimes it has just taken a little awareness-raising and encouragement, information and a few successful attempts for women to transit from leadership of women to a position in the local political hierarchy. Immediately after a national workshop of the National Council of Women in Tuvalu where women learned of the important role of the island development committees in developing projects and getting assistance for the Island's needs, three women stood for election to these committees and won. This success would undoubtedly be an incentive for other women, especially if the women in the committee perform well. The training of these women in their role as committee members to ensure their success, seeing that these trained and experienced women gradually rise to higher levels of decision-making and keeping up the support that others need to enter the local politics and public affairs is a continuing responsibility of the Tuvalu National Council of Women until women's participation becomes routine.

2. Positive trends

One noticeable change in the older, so-called traditional non-governmental organizations such as YWCAs, National Councils of Women (NCWs) and other associations, is their gradual move from concern with welfare issues and the domestic life of the women to the larger international regional development trends and national policies. Thus, the women of the Pacific Conference of Churches (for example) have taken a clear and active stance against nuclear weapons and testing in the Pacific, and the international YWCA campaigns against persecution and imprisonment of women because of political and ideological beliefs.

Some traditional club organizations such as Soroptimists or Lionesses also in the years of the Decade have begun to pay increasing attention to education and training of women not only in home economics, but in business, technical fields, agriculture, media and communication, by providing scholarships and broadening their funding activities.

The new consciousness of women's progress and subtle changes in the causes that these non-governmental organizations are supporting are undoubtedly influenced by international pressures and programmes and expedited by publicity about women's status and rights accompanying the International Women's Year and Decade.

Another useful development which has strengthened the power base of a number of non-governmental organizations is their coming together and uniting into loosely knit national organizations, mostly for resource sharing while maintaining their autonomy. The uniting of numerous clubs and groups has been a very difficult task for the promoters, although, it has become increasingly obvious to non-governmental organizations that by banding together they are more powerful. In countries where parochial and cultural obstacles have been overcome and women's groups have united, they have accomplished more in terms of influencing policy, plans and programmes.

There is a difference, however, between national organizations which came together of their own accord and those which were persuaded to join a national organization established as an arm of the government. While the former may experience conflicts of interest or objectives, at least they have the freedom to speak out, to leave or to stay and overcome their differences. In the latter case, non-governmental organizations can feel co-opted and restricted by affliation with a government organization.

Governments and national machineries have pushed for unity and co-operation and rewarded non-governmental organizations that join the national organizations by making the national organizations the major recipients of attention, resources and ultimately more power.

One of the dilemmas facing the non-governmental organizations then is the choice between independent action with doubtful results, or the possibility of becoming an instrument for actions over which they can have no real control.

Obviously there are benefits and dangers in joining depending on the form of the national organization and its relationship with non-governmental organizations.

E. RELATIONSHIP WITH NATIONAL MACHINERIES

Normally in human societies, "organization" comes toward the end of a process in which people identify with and collectively act to achieve some objective. "Organization" in this process, becomes the apparatus for maintaining momentum and institutionalizing the aims, so actions can be directed and controlled. Anything from emergence of nations to a women's coffee clache could follow this path. As Anisul Rahman says in his analysis of the Bhoomi Sena Movement in India, institutions arise and evolve from the creative, collective actions of people as opposed to centrally-directed people's action. (Rahman 1981).

This is the process by which most non-governmental women's organizations aimed at changing and improving some aspect of women's lives came about prior to the 1970s. Not so for women's specialized and specifically established machineries which have resulted from international and domestic pressures to respond to the aims of the International Women's Year and Decade. In these cases, national machineries (organizations to be precise) have preceded women's collective action toward some objective and are indeed expected to generate the collective action, the movement.

This condition creates the first and most important handicap for these organizations. All the efforts to motivate, mobilize, involve and organize women, are related to the fact that some apparatus has been created and is then expected to be embraced by women as if it naturally evolved. The difficulty is compounded by another fact that the machinery/organization has been set up by a different group than that comprising its theoretical constituency. This is especially true in poorer, developing countries with a small, educated, urbanized elite and a vast majority of illiterate rural women. Since many countries in the region fit that description, it would seem that this pattern has been unavoidable, and the dilemma raised here is not in the way of criticism but in explanation of difficulties faced by these machineries and non-governmental organizations.

Establishment of these machineries in this rather artificial way can always be justified by saying that we cannot wait for a spontaneous movement to arise and the job or function of the machniery is to act as the conscience, or the voice of those who are aware, to awake the rest of the women, and spearhead a movement. The problem is that the organization may be made up of people who have few or no relationships or linkages with the rest of the women, and

their voices may penetrate a very small circle around the perimeters of their own group.

Why governments have not used the existing and long-established non-governmental organizations as the machinery is a matter for speculation, but in most cases non-governmental organizations prefer the autonomy and freedom they enjoy outside the establishment and would not trade it for becoming a government-directed institution. This preference however does not prevent them from seeing the government national machinery as rivals and impediments to reaching the power and resources at government disposal. As was mentioned before there are reasons for their perceptions. In some countries, national machineries may be seen as a hindrance to the work of non-governmental organizations, especially if they work to keep non-governmental organizations in their control.

F. ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

Traditionally, both forms of women's organizations, whether growing out of spontaneous needs or established by a few at the top, face identical problems in reverse. The spontaneous organizations with a broad base of support have usually grown outside the established system and face difficulties reaching the top decision-makers, while the centrally established ones have no linkage with a constituency. In the former, there is a headless base and in the latter, a head without a base. Obviously, this human imbalance poses a fundamental problem for the stability and long life of both types of organization. The central issue here is access to power in order to reach aims and objectives. While numerous non-governmental organizations struggle to find access to resources and decision-making at the top, the central ones languish and wither away for lack of effectiveness and an identifiable, strong constituency. Even those who set them up may not take them seriously after the first flush of self-congratulation. A government establishes a women's commission, declares all sorts of commendable intentions and appoints prominent women. When it comes to the nitty-gritty of plans and budgets, all groups with a strong constituency in the parliament scramble for a share of the pie, but where does the women's commission figure in it? Who is lobbying for them? Who is pressuring the government in support of them?

If the central issue of access to power is common, but the means of reaching it different, is there any way that the two groups can meet half-way? Is there a common ground where the barter can take place (as indeed it is a barter of central decision-making power with the potential power of group action). In other words, can women from these different organizations find ways of mutual assistance to bend decision-makers and politicians to achieve similar objectives for women?

The catch is not that there are no ways or meeting grounds; the catch is in having common objectives, and the first step toward reaching common

objectives is communication, a requirement which fortunately seems to be better understood in the second half of the Decade than before. The next step is accepting the power base of each group and utilizing it for the achievement of objectives. Once women have opened channels of communication and understood each other's needs, building strategies does not pose difficulties. In some cases, the government-organized national machinery has had to separate itself from the establishment in order to reach the majority of women and bring the numerous non-governmental organizations into the fold.

1. Avoidance of fundamental issues of equity

Unfortunately government-supported national organizations may avoid the more fundamental and deeply ingrained cultural discriminations and oppressions of women and those controversial issues that have to do with the very basic human rights of individual women. Much is heard of women's support of revolutionary and national peace and antinuclear liberation movements, economic development, people's participation, political participation, employment and all the other issues. But more support is needed at *all* levels and particularly from national women's organizations for opposition to basic human rights abuses such as bride price, child and forced marriage, violence against women and so on.

Ideally, protection of human and women's rights should become part and parcel of a country's form of government and law and not need vigilante citizen action; but until this state becomes a reality, independent women's groups who can publicize infractions of women's rights, educate public opinion and mobilize people for support of women's rights are needed.

2. Division and conflict of objectives and means

There are genuine and legitimate reasons to call for unity and co-operation among non-governmental organizations and with national organizations. In many countries the profusion of non-governmental organizations with conflicting objectives has paralysed movements for enhancing women's status, exactly the opposite of their original purpose.

Governments are bombarded with so many opposing demands from non-governmental organizations that they are hard put to know what the women want. Highly placed officials, at public meetings of women's groups, openings and closings of workshops, have said repeatedly that when women can get themselves together, we will listen to them, but we cannot do anything unless they tell us with a united voice what they want. The message is clear and loud; government officials and aid agency personnel have lost patience with querulous women's groups at logger-heads with each other. They are tired of receiving opposing demands. They do not have resources to be divided into too many piece-meal projects, and women will be listened to if they are organized, are well-represented and present a unified front.

3. Political powerlessness and lack of participation in decision-making

This problem in the existing political structures is well-known but when a structure is established on the promise of sharing power and decision-making with women and it uses women and relegates them to their inferior position, it is harder to tolerate. This situation is repeated and is on-going at present in many parts of the world and in some countries of this region.

4. Resource constraints

Resource constraints have been identified by many women's groups as an impediment to their activities. The seriousness of this constraint is doubtful however. It is perhaps not so much that there are no or few resources at women's disposal or that they are incapable of mobilizing the resources, but that they have been used for other purposes than women's development. Women are capable of mobilizing tremendous resources from among themselves and the community. This is evident from their fund-raising for religious and charity purposes. Perhaps what non-governmental organizations need is to redirect the resources they can mobilize for different ends from their traditional ones.

The Decade for Women also released tremendous resources in the area of women's development programmes, but the experimental nature of programmes, duplication of efforts, jealousies of agencies in guarding their own interests, randomness of many activities, shifts of objectives which made the continuity of even good programmes very difficult, diffused the effect of the resources. Projects were abandoned in mid-programmes, projects did not reach the second phase, organizations were established with aid money and left to die a natural dealth when the money dried up. Few governments have allocated grants and provisions for non-governmental organizations, or even the national machinery, in their regular national budgets. The administration of national machinery and women's development programmes has been entirely tied to the availability of foreign aid, and has suffered because of it.

G. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

From what has been described of the achievements and the obstacles impeding the role of non-governmental organizations, and from analysis of successful experiments in promoting women's access to power and decision-making, a few clear directions emerge. Some of the primary ones are:

(a) The need for small non-governmental organizations with limited resources and power to organize into federations and associations for resources sharing and deriving strength from each other, while maintaining autonomy to select their own objectives and programmes. Preferably, each affiliate organization should select one issue or cause, and show their support for and not duplicate the work of other organizations. The role of the federation or association

would be to support the efforts of members. An example of this is when the Fiji National Council of Women supported the Nurses Association, an affiliate member, in their strike for fairer criteria for selection of nurses.

(b) The need for directing activities toward achieving visibility, participation and power for women, starting from the local level and in political, administrative, planning and productive processes. A concomitant requirement for such activities is that the non-governmental organization leadership and members receive training and experience in understanding the local and national political, government and other decision-making structures and processes, in awareness-raising, organizing and mobilizing tactics, in planning and implementation skills, and depending on the context, those skills which would contribute to the local women's self-reliance and socio-economic enhancement.

(c) The need for identification and admission of the subtle socio-cultural and customary beliefs and practices which discriminate against women in any locality. There is a tendency to generalize personal experience and experiences of one group of women (usually the privileged) to the rest of the female population. There is a tendency to accept and be pressured by outside influences and priorities. There is a tendency to try to cope with surface issues and acceptable problems. It is up to women's groups to overcome self-deception, group deception, national deception. No one else is going to do it for women; women need to investigate, research, find facts, open channels of real communication with each other, not generalize; be bold, give each other support, not be intimidated, and be heard.

(d) The need to take sides, to take action on one's beliefs, to find like-minded people, and to organize. Some women may give up, others may lose heart when faced with obstacles, or they lose interest when defeated. No great goals in history have been accomplished without dogged perseverance, without iron determination. Women's organizations must become the strongest believers in what they are trying to do, because their struggle is the hardest.

(e) The need to co-operate in using national machineries' access to government and non-governmental organizations' wide base of support and identification with women at all socio-economic levels.

(f) The need to unite for consolidation of gains and organize for maintenance of momentum. Women organize and give of themselves whole-heartedly for achievement of national goals, but revert to isolationism, division and conflict when faced with resistance to their own goals. Non-governmental organizations must band together and put their parochial interests aside if they are to have influence. Nothing gets the attention of policy-makers and politicians better than the determination of an organized group. They may try to suppress organized movements but they cannot ignore them. For example in 1980 at the twentieth South Pacific Conference in Papua New Guinea which had the theme "Women in Development" on its agenda and one woman among the delegates, it was the peaceful demonstration of Papua New Guinea women's

organizations which led to the seating of several women and a resolution calling on the governments to approve and ask the South Pacific Commission to seek funds for a meeting of Pacific Women to discuss their common problems and concerns. The meeting known as the Tahiti meeting of Pacific Women led to the establishment of the Pacific Women's Resource Bureau, an organization established by women, run by them and for them.

(g) Women's organizations and movements need to become financially independent. Dependency on resources from outside, especially through aid agencies and national machinery, is bound to affect them adversely if the resources are withdrawn or lessened. It also erodes their integrity and direction, because aid always comes with strings attached and acceptance of the strings is inevitable when there is need.

(h) There is also a need to open channels of communication and keep contact with women's movements and non-governmental organizations regionally and internationally, for the purpose of sharing experiences and learning from each other, and for the feeling of confidence which sympathizers and supporters engender.

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